



EDXC Conference Dublin 2009

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The 2009 European DX Council (EDXC) Conference was held from 28-30 August at the Grand Canal Hotel in Dublin. The British DX Club is an Observer member of the EDXC.

In total 44 DXers and partners attended the conference - 16 from Finland, 9 from the UK, 5 from Sweden, 4 from Ireland, 3 from Denmark, 2 from Japan, 2 from USA and 1 each from Germany, Russia and Turkey. It was good to see six BDXC members there: George Brown (Scotland), Patrick Cody (Ireland), Ken Fletcher, Dave Kenny, Alan Pennington and Mike Terry (all England).



The Grand Canal Hotel is a modern and comfortable 3-star hotel in Ballsbridge, south of the River Liffey and east of the city centre but within easy reach of most of the Dublin attractions. So many of us took the opportunity to visit some of the Irish capital's sights before and after the conference.

Friday evening, after registering with the EDXC's Tibor Szilagyi, delegates were able to meet up in the hotel's Gasworks bar or visit some of the many city centre pubs.

The conference started on Saturday morning with welcoming speeches from Dublin City councillor Rebecca Moynihan, EDXC Secretary-General Tibor Szilagyi and conference organiser Edward Dunne. Tibor told us the EDXC currently had 12 full member clubs and 4 observer members. He said he had sent out invitations to the conference to 27 broadcasters but, once again, very few had accepted or even replied. The broadcaster representatives at the conference were Mike Adams (FEBC), Andrew Janitschek (Radio Free Asia), Arto Mujunen (IBB's Helsinki office), Dr Ufuk Gecim (Voice of Turkey – TRT) and Simon Maher (Phantom 105.2 Dublin).

The first speaker was Mike Adams of FEBC, who is also the Vice-President of the National Association of Shortwave Broadcasters (NASB), a body representing US non-government shortwave broadcasters (see www.shortwave.org). Mike's well-illustrated talk, entitled "Short Wave Disaster Radio and Studio-in-a-Suitcase" told how FEBA UK engineers had developed a ready-to-use mobile studio which can be hand-carried to any location. On the outside it looks like an ordinary suitcase, and as it weighs less than 20kg, it can be taken as hold luggage on any flight. Open the suitcase lid and you have a ready-made radio studio with a mixer, laptop, recorder, CD player, microphone and speakers. The 'Chrysolite' suitcase studio can be used with an FM transmitter housed in a similar sized suitcase, or the studio can link via the internet to SW transmitters elsewhere. Costs around £5,500 each and 30 have been built so far. The suitcase studio is a rapid-response unit than can be in use anywhere in the world within 72 hours, for example in a disaster area.



right: Chrysolite suitcase studio (photo Mike Adams)

Mike showed us photos of the studio in use last year following the floods in Bihar, northern India where two daily half hour programmes were prepared using the studio and sent via the internet to shortwave transmitters. There is more information on the Feba website <http://www.feba.org.uk/suitcase> and a demo on Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EzBa5lf2us>. Mike had with him the Zoom H2 handy portable digital recorder (right) which is included in the suitcase studio and used for interviews in the field. Weighing 110g (without its 2x AA batteries) it can record in the WAV or Mp3 format, has 4 built-in mics and USB interface – quite a tempting piece of kit!



Following on from Mike's talk, Simon Maher arrived from Dublin indie rock station Phantom 105.2. Simon presents a daily weekday show, as well as being General Manger at Phantom which used to be a pirate before



launching as a licensed station in 2006. Some of you may remember the 'Anorak Hour' programme Phantom broadcast in its pirate days, and briefly after it became licensed. Simon told us not just about Phantom though, but the current radio scene in Dublin and Ireland. The main transmitter providers are RTÉ NL especially for the national stations (see www.rtenl.ie) and Rock Solid Communications who Phantom use. Most Dublin stations transmit from the 450 metre high Three Rock Mountain site in use from 1978 (and visible in the panoramic views from the Gravity Bar at the top of the Guinness Storehouse). Prior to this, they used Kippure TV site in the Wicklow Mountains. As in the UK, commercial stations are riding out the 'credit-crunch' and in this climate there is little enthusiasm for Digital DAB radio. RTÉ stations are currently broadcast on DAB to Dublin and the North East, but a second multiplex carrying commercial stations, stopped its trial in November 2008. Commercial stations are now awaiting a licensing proposal for DAB from the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) and

regulator Comreg. No licensed stations currently use mediumwave in Ireland, though Christian station Spirit Radio plan to use it from Tullamore in addition to FM after they launch. Simon said there were 4 or 5 FM pirates in the Dublin area still (though we only heard one which didn't ID in the hotel). And on mediumwave, Energy 1395 broadcasts at weekends, and puts out a good signal even though apparently it's from somebody's back garden shed! One way the authorities have countered pirate radio is to fine landowners (€1000-€2000) who allow their property to be used by pirate stations. A lively talk from Simon, well-received by the audience.



Jonathan Murphy, who is at the University College Cork, then gave a well-researched talk on the role of the media in the Baltic States during their struggle for independence from the USSR in 1991. As some of us had visited Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (after the 2008 conference last year) and had seen some of the sites Jonathan mentioned (e.g. the TV tower in Vilnius) we appreciated this chronology. It would have been useful to have heard his talk ahead of our visit to these countries last year!

Andrew Janitschek of Radio Free Asia has been a frequent attendee at EDXC Conferences in recent years. The station is just celebrating its 13th anniversary – their first broadcast was in Mandarin on 29 September 1996. To mark this occasion a new QSL card (their 30th) has been

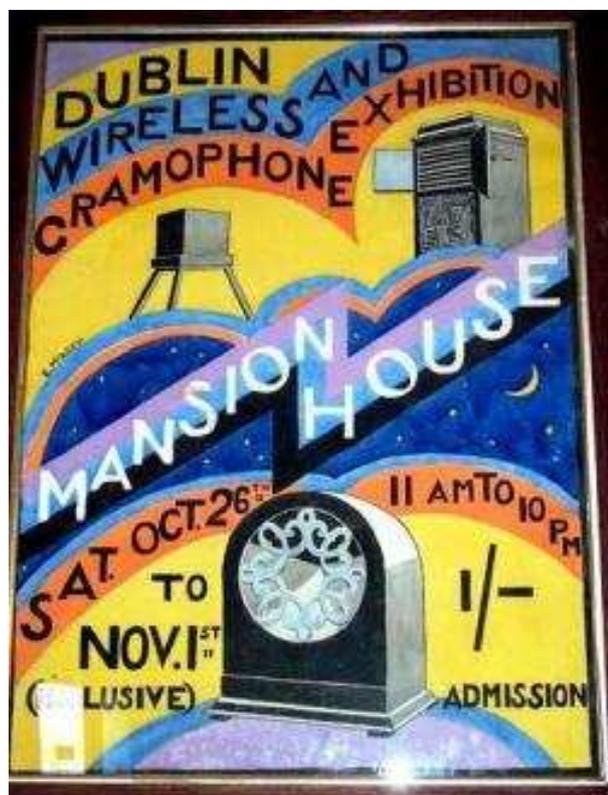
issued featuring a child's drawing of flowers in an RFA vase which had its debut at the Dublin conference. This card is available for all confirmed reports between 1 September and 31 December 2009. Andrew also highlighted the fact that RFA QSL cards now can verify six specific transmitter sites they use (rather than just two they did at first). These are Biblis, Kuwait, Saipan Lampertheim, Tinian and Sri Lanka. However other sites are still verified as just 'Asia' or even more vaguely, 'Other'. They seem rather keen to verify listener reports promptly and issue new QSL designs every couple of months now. They have an automated online report at <http://techweb.rfa.org/form/dx.html> or you can email reports to gsl@rfa.org.

Finally before our lunch, Dr Ufuk Geçim, head of the German section at the Voice of Turkey spoke to delegates (in German) and said she hoped to welcome us to Ankara for the 2010 EDXC conference (tentative dates are 30 September-3 October 2010, but to be confirmed).

After lunch at the hotel we boarded a coach with guide for a sightseeing tour of the city of Dublin. At first we headed south of the city, not to a usual tourist sight, but to the headquarters and main studios of the national broadcaster, RTÉ, in Donnybrook. From the coach we only caught occasional glimpses of the buildings, but towering over us was the 120 metre high transmission mast, which apparently is decorated with lights at Christmas. As well as the modern steel, concrete and bronze glass of the RTÉ studio buildings, there is an old mansion, Montrose House, in the grounds where Marconi stayed - it belonged to his mother's family (the Jamesons of Irish Whiskey fame). RTÉ's Radio Centre had moved to Donnybrook from Henry Street in the city centre in 1973.



(right: RTE mast & studios, Donnybrook (photo by Mike Terry))



Our coach then headed back to the city centre to see some of the historic and cultural sights of Dublin before heading east to the coast and 'Ye Olde Hurdy-Gurdy Museum of Vintage Radio' at Howth (see separate 'Collectors Corner' in this issue).

(left: 1929 Dublin Exhibition poster at Wireless Museum)

Back at the hotel in the evening, the traditional EDXC Banquet was held. After we had finished eating there was a free raffle draw in which everybody seemed to win at least one prize of radio station giveaways!

Sunday morning in the conference room, Risto Vähäkainu gave us the results of his research into current DX activities around the world, especially which countries still had active DX clubs. He listed 28 countries and the clubs he thought were still active and also listed activities vital to keep a club alive – a regular printed bulletin and maybe a website, meetings and DXpeditions (the latter seems very important in Risto's home country, Finland!). He didn't mention a most important ingredient – volunteers to keep the club running and just as important, an active body of DXers in the country! Following on from Risto's talk, Secretary-General Tibor Szilagyi chaired a panel of some of the clubs represented at the conference. Anker Petersen (DSWCI), Alan Pennington (BDXC-UK),

Alexander Beryozkin (St Petersburg DX Club), Kari Kivekas (Finnish DX Association), Edward Dunne (Irish DX Club), Claes Englund (Swedish DX Forbund), Toshi Ohtake (Japan SW Club) and Tibor Szilagyi (Hungarian DX Club) gave an overview of their current activities, membership numbers etc. Tibor concluded with the news he was happy to continue as EDXC Secretary-General, but deputy Tore Ekblom had decided to stand down, so it was proposed that Ingvar Kohlstrom from Sweden should replace him.



After a break for the conference group photo outside the Grand Canal Hotel, Jukka Kotovirta gave a review of the summer 2009, FM DXing in Finland. It had been another poor season for FM DX in Finland he told us with sporadic E clouds not favouring the Finns. His chart plotting each year since 1974 on a scale between 'very good' to 'very poor' showed 2009 right down at the bottom

alongside 1978 as one of the poorest, with 1987 still up top as the best year in this period. He suggested that FM conditions vary along with stock market prices! We saw some photos of the FM DXpeditions they make to Utö-island off south west Finland where there are cabins on the beach, so a nice looking place to visit, even if conditions aren't so good (see photo above)! There is a blog of Utö island DXpeditions at <http://uto-fmdx.blogspot.com/>. Jukka recommends the DX Sherlock real-time SpE maps as a tool for predicting Sporadic E openings. These can be found at www.vhfdx.net. Despite poor conditions in Finland in 2009, North American FM had again been received in Northern Ireland in 2009 by Paul Logan, including on 26 June, 90.7 WVAS Montgomery, Alabama a huge 6,456 km distance! Also Big FM 92.7 India was heard in the Ukraine (around 4700 km). Jukka's FM review now seem a regular feature of EDXC conferences!

The final speaker at this year's conference was Art Mujunen from the IBB's Helsinki office, who had been at the HFCC (High-Frequency Co-ordination Conference) in the Dominican Republic 17-22 August. He mentioned the work of the conference settling schedules for B09 and the problem of stations including "wooden" registrations in their schedules (i.e. transmissions that don't actually take place). Also the problem of including schedules from non-HFCC members (which means they cannot be negotiated at the HFCC meeting). Amongst other things, Arto also mentioned Vatican Radio and Radio Netherlands swapping airtime.

The conference closed lunchtime Sunday with a special thanks to Edward Dunne who had organised the event single-handedly. As always the conference had been a great opportunity to meet fellow DXers from Europe and beyond!

Dave Kenny and myself stayed on in Dublin for an extra day to see some more of the city. As well as the usual tourist attractions such as Trinity College with the Book of Kells, we also saw a couple of radio related sites. Just along the canal from the hotel (in Warrington Place) we saw the offices of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI). And just north of the River Liffey in the city centre we spotted what must be an old medium wave aerial atop a building in Capel Street (see photo on front cover) – presumably leftover from the 1970s or 80s when pirate stations filled the mediumwaves in Dublin (I remember hearing Radio Dublin, ARD, Big D, Radio Carousel and Boyneside Radio when I lived in Lancashire in the 1970s). Member Ian Biggar has now confirmed this is very likely the aerial of Radio City (257 metres), not a station I recall hearing, but some of you may well remember it! © Alan Pennington - British DX Club